

SECTION II

DECISIONS

SUMMARY OF THE DECISION

My decision is to approve, adopt, and implement, the Forest Plan which accompanies the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS). I have made this decision after fully understanding and reviewing the alternatives available to me. This decision is a modification of Alternative I in the FEIS. My decision to modify Alternative I is discussed in greater detail below, but first I would like to clarify the terminology for alternatives and then give you some background on the development of Alternative I.

The terminology surrounding alternatives is difficult to understand and some clarification is needed to give the reader a full understanding of the subtle differences. The FEIS analyzes several alternatives, one of which is Alternative I. After completion of the analysis of alternatives, Alternative I was recommended as the "preferred alternative". These terms are synonymous and for ease I will use Alternative I throughout the remainder of this document. After review of the alternatives I have decided to select Alternative I after making some modifications, which is referred to as the "selected alternative" or Alternative I as modified.

Now, for some background on Alternative I. It is the result of, and represents, the incorporation of public comments received on the DEIS and Proposed Land and Resource Management Plan, the State of Oregon's involvement, incorporation of new information and legislation, and additional analyses conducted following the DEIS. Alternative I attempts to respond to issues in a reasoned, deliberate, comprehensive, and equitable manner. It is my goal to select an alternative which best provides for healthy and productive forest and range ecosystems, and I feel Alternative I, as modified, best meets this goal. The selected alternative includes the following goals for responding to issues and concerns.

- Maintain visual character of the Forest through use of uneven-aged management on up to 30% of the suitable timber acreage
- Maintain big-game habitat in providing for animal populations at or near state management objective levels.
- Provide a timber supply (or harvest level) and livestock production at or near recent levels
- Provide for a high level of anadromous fish production and riparian protection throughout all streamside zones
- Provide old growth and mature tree habitat above the Management Requirement (MR) levels
- Intensify timber management activities where severe insect and disease conditions have resulted.
- Maintain the amenity attributes in most roadless areas that have had strong public interest regarding those features
- Provide for production of ponderosa pine over time by converting potential pine sites from mixed conifer composition
- Provide for a mix of unroaded, roaded, and closed road dispersed recreation that is compatible with other resource objectives
- Maintain community stability by providing for the physical, biological, economic and social environment of the Forest's area of influence.

Further, the Forest Plan establishes numerous multiple use goals and desired future conditions. These are discussed in detail in FOREST PLAN, CHAPTER IV, and FEIS, CHAPTER II.

It is vital for the reviewer to understand what the Forest Plan does not do. It does not.

- Maximize any single resource use or public service.
- Propose the use of any resource beyond the biological capability of the land to support that use.
- Propose management of any resource based solely on values in the market place.

As I stated earlier, my decision is to modify Alternative I. Some changes reflecting my decision have been able to be made in the Forest Plan prior to going to the printer and others have not. I find it in the best interest of all parties to fully disclose the status and nature of these changes. All of these changes are discussed in much greater detail in ROD, SECTION III, RATIONALE FOR THE DECISION. My intent here is to briefly introduce the reader to the modifications I have made to Alternative I and provide a single place for tracking the status of changes. The Forest Plan will fully incorporate these changes at the soonest possible date. If this is unable to be done prior to the first Plan amendment, these changes will be incorporated into that first amendment. No additional NEPA analysis will be required to incorporate the following changes

Change between Alternative I and the Selected Alternative	Forest Plan Current?		
	land allocation	standards	outputs
Additional protection to Class I & II nonanadromous riparian areas	No	Yes	No
Increase in HEI objectives in both summer and winter range	No	No	No
Reduction of winter range satisfactory and total cover standards on selected watersheds	No	Yes	No
Reduction of summer range satisfactory cover standards in Malheur & Silvies watersheds.	No	Yes	No
Reduction of cover acreage standards for summer range in Malheur & Silvies watersheds.	No	Yes	No
Change Dry Cabin from Management Area 20 (wildlife emphasis w/ scheduled harvest) to Management Area 21 (wildlife emphasis without scheduled harvest)	No	N/A	No
Change McClellan Mountain from Management Area 10 (Semiprimitive nonmotorized) to Management Area 21 (wildlife emphasis without scheduled harvest)	No	N/A	No
Add economically inefficient acres into the suitable land base	No	N/A	No

ELEMENTS OF THE DECISION

The program decisions I make here are accompanied by the necessary supporting NEPA analysis and disclosure required by law and regulation. Additional NEPA analysis for these decisions is not expected to be done and is not required. These decisions *may* be revisited or reassessed during implementation, but they do not have to be. These decisions are as follows

- Forest-wide goals and objectives
- Forest-wide desired future condition
- Forest-wide standards
- Management area goals and location
- Management area standards
- Monitoring program and evaluation process.
- Identification (location) of lands considered suitable for timber harvesting
- Establishment of the Forest-wide allowable sale quantity

INTENDED ACTIVITIES

I also intend to accomplish certain scheduled activities. Unlike the programmatic decisions listed above, these are *not* accompanied by all supporting NEPA analysis and disclosure required by law and regulation. Additional environmental analysis will be done during Forest Plan implementation. These proposed and probable activities are displayed in the activity schedules FOREST PLAN, APPENDIX A.

It is important to note that all proposals in the Forest Plan can be accomplished from a physical, biological, economic, social, and legal perspective. It is not certain that these proposals will be accomplished. First, the outputs specified in the Forest Plan are estimates and projections based on available inventory data and assumptions.

Second, all activities, many of which are interdependent, may be affected by annual budgets. The Forest Plan is implemented through various site-specific projects such as wildlife habitat improvements, campground development, road building or timber sales. Budget allocations for any given year covered by the Forest Plan may cause projects to be rescheduled. However, the goals and land use allocations described in the Forest Plan will not change unless the Plan itself were changed. If actual budgets are significantly different from those projected over a period of several years, the Forest Plan may have to be amended and, consequently, would reflect different outputs and environmental conditions. The significance of changes related to budgets or other factors is determined in the context of the particular circumstances.

During implementation, when the various projects are designed, site-specific analyses will be performed. These analyses may be disclosed in an environmental document and may result in an amendment or revision of the Forest Plan. Any resulting documents are to be tiered to the FEIS for the Forest Plan, pursuant to 40 CFR 1508.28

RECOMMENDATION

I also am recommending a decision to the Chief, who holds the authority to make a final decision on establishment of Research Natural Areas (RNAs). Like my final decisions, this recommendation *is* accompanied by all supporting NEPA analysis and disclosure required by law and regulation. However, the authority to make a final decision on the issue lies outside my authority. If the Chief accepts the recommendation, the resulting final decision *will not* ordinarily be revisited or reassessed by the Forest Service during implementation.

In this Forest Plan I am recommending four Research Natural Areas (Dixie Butte, Baldy Mountain, Dugout Creek and Shaketable) in addition to the one that has already been established (Canyon Creek). I strongly recommend that these four areas become established RNAs to provide for research, observation and study of undisturbed ecosystems. The importance of what we can learn from these ecosystems cannot be overemphasized, in that it helps to establish a baseline from which we can measure our successes.